

ENGLAND'S FIRST BEER BREWERS, 1418-1480

VANCE MEAD AND ROSEMARY SIMONS

The brewing of beer using hops was introduced in England during the 15th century by Dutch and German brewers. The purpose of this paper is to use the plea rolls of the Court of Common Pleas to show who some of these brewers were and where they lived. These data also show a transition from Dutch and German beer brewers to a predominantly English industry in the 1460s.

Common pleas

The Court of Common Pleas was the largest of the Common Law courts at that time. It was for civil cases between subjects for recovering land, collecting debts, and suing for trespass (a wrong done, as in 'Forgive us our trespasses.'). The plea rolls record the stages of a lawsuit from the original complaint by the plaintiff to the point where the case went to trial by jury. Issues of law were dealt with before the justices in Westminster Hall during term time; issues of fact were decided by juries before justices on circuit in the counties between terms. The four law terms were Hilary, Easter, Trinity, and Michaelmas, or winter, spring, summer, and autumn.

Common Pleas and other legal records dating back to 1200 have been photographed under licence from The National Archives and put online by the University of Houston at Anglo-American Legal Tradition (A.A.L.T., see <http://aalt.law.uh.edu>). To make these records more accessible, Rosemary Simons and I have indexed 57 law terms (so far) between 1381 and 1554; 27 of these terms are in the 15th century. (See http://aalt.law.uh.edu/Indices/CP40Indices/CP40_Indices.html)

The middling sort of people

The plea rolls of the Court of Common Pleas are valuable because they record a wide range of people. In each term during this period there are 5,000 to 6,000 entries, with about 15 to 20 thousand names, most also identified by dwelling place and occupation. Professor Robert Palmer of A.A.L.T. has calculated that about 70% of defendants in 1465 were labourers, husbandmen, yeomen, and 'men of occupation' such as butchers, bakers, and brewers.

The first generations of beer brewers

In the law terms indexed so far, 53 people have been found from 1418 to 1480 whose occupation is given as 'beer brewer' and once 'beer maker'. Hundreds more are identified only as 'brewer'. Ale brewing and beer brewing were separate professions. Ale brewers were not allowed to use hops, but beer brewers were free to do so. (See Martyn Cornell, *Zythophile*, <http://zythophile.co.uk/false-ale-quotes/myth-two-hops-were-forbidden-by-henry-vi/>)

For comparison, in Easter term 1430 there were three beer brewers and 54 brewers: 24 brewers dwelt in London and Middlesex; eight in Bristol and Somerset; six in Wiltshire (five of them in Salisbury); six in Essex and Hertfordshire; two in Oxford; two in Bishop's Lynn; two in Kent and Surrey; and one each in York, Worcester, Staffordshire, and Lincolnshire. The prominence of London is explained both by its size and the ease of bringing lawsuits from there to Westminster. Few cases came from Northumberland, Cumberland,

and Westmorland, and none from Lancashire, Cheshire, and Durham, which had separate legal systems. The predominance of the larger towns must be due to the 40 shilling limit on lawsuits in the Court of Common Pleas: the village alewife rarely had trade of that size.

The East of England

If one were to draw a line from Sussex to York, all of the beer brewers in this survey would be found to the east of that line. 20 of them are found in the counties of Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, and Hertford; 16 are in Surrey, Kent, and Sussex; nine in London and Middlesex, and eight in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire. One of these, William Peuter or Peutere, is recorded in Canterbury and Lydd, Kent, as well as in St. Osyth, Essex. For the purposes of these calculations he is included in Kent.

The usual points of entry for people and innovations coming from the Low Countries were East Anglia, London, and the Cinque Ports, hence the prevalence of hopped beer in these areas in the 15th century. This was also true of other innovations, such as the New Draperies in the 16th century. This was the name given to textiles introduced by Flemings, particularly in East Anglia and Kent.

Dutch or German beer brewers

16 beer brewers with German or Dutch names were found. In most of these cases, a surname such as Ducheman makes identification simple. In some cases, a name such as Alardson, Doys, or Derykson can be identified using the database at England's Immigrants. (See <https://www.englishimmigrants.com/>)

Ten of these immigrant beer brewers are found in the period 1418 to 1465 and six in the years 1468 to 1480. In some cases, a surname such as Johnson or Broun might be either English or an Anglicised version of a German name. In these cases (with the exception of Herman Johnson) I have included them among the English. Six beer brewers, surnamed Berebrewer, must be classified as 'Uncertain', though I suspect that they were probably recent immigrants. If this is the case, then the figures are 13 Dutch beer brewers to 1465 and nine from 1468.

Predominantly English after 1465

31 of the beer brewers, judging by their surnames, are English. Of these, seven are found in and before 1465, and 24 in 1468 and afterwards. The 1460s must therefore be seen as a watershed in the change from an industry that was mainly in the hands of immigrants to one that was predominantly English.

The T.N.A. reference gives the catalogue number of the record at the National Archives. You can use the A.A.L.T. link to view the original record. For convenience I have included the position of the entry.

German or Dutch beer brewers

1418 Easter term

In last entry: Kent. Deric Richard, of Smalhyde, Kent, beer maker

TNA CP40/629

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no629/aCP40no629fronts/IMG_0730.htm

1418 Easter term

In 2nd to last entry: Lincs. Adwin Williamson, 'Docheman', of Lincoln St Botolph, beer brewer

TNA CP40/629

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/H5/CP40no629/bCP40no629dorses/IMG_1219.htm

1430 Easter term

In 2nd entry: Norwich. John Splytte, of Norwich, beer brewer

TNA CP 40/677

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no677/bCP40no677dorses/IMG_1446.htm

1430 Easter term

In 5th entry: Suff. Aldewin Ducheman, of Gorleston, Suffolk, beer brewer

TNA CP 40/677

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no677/aCP40no677fronts/IMG_0442.htm

1440 Easter term

In 2nd entry: Surrey. John de Gyldere, of London, beer brewer

TNA CP40/717

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no717/bCP40no717dorses/IMG_1497.htm

1440 Easter term

In 3rd entry: Yorks. James Garardson, of Kingston upon Hull, Yorks, beer brewer
TNA CP40/717

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no717/bCP40no717dorses/IMG_1692.htm

1460 Hilary term

In 4th entry: Norf. Frederick Berebrewer alias Ducheman, of Bishop's Lenn, Norf, beer brewer & merchant
TNA CP40/796

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no796/aCP40no796fronts/IMG_0563.htm

1463 Hilary term

In 1st entry: Middx. John Derykson, of Stanes, Middx, beer brewer
TNA CP 40/807

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no807/aCP40no807fronts/IMG_0144.htm

1465 Hilary term

In 1st entry: London. John Alardson, beer brewer
TNA CP40/814

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0957.htm

1465 Hilary term

In 1st entry: Middx. Henry Derykson, of Stanes, beer brewer
TNA CP40/814

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0890.htm

1468 Hilary term

In 2nd entry: London. John Doys, of London, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1540.htm

1470 Michaelmas term

In 3rd entry: London. Silvester Adelwold, of Lewes, Sussex, beer brewer
TNA CP40/837

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no837/bCP40no837dorses/IMG_0554.htm

1475 Hilary term

In 1st entry: London. Cornelius Claysson, of St Botolph without Algate, beer brewer
TNA CP40/853

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no853/bCP40no853dorses/IMG_1115.htm

1477 Hilary term

In 2nd entry: Suff. Edward Derykson, of Walbursweke, Suff, beer brewer
TNA CP40/861

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/bCP40no861dorses/IMG_0427.htm

1477 Hilary term

In 5th entry: Kent. John Alard, of Dertford, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/861

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/bCP40no861dorses/IMG_0292.htm

1480 Hilary term

In 3rd entry: Kent. Herman Johnson, of Rochester, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/871

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/aCP40no871fronts/IMG_0855.htm

Uncertain

1430 Easter term

In 6th entry: Yorks. William Berebrewer, of Kyngeston upon Hull, Yorks, beer brewer
TNA CP40/677

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no677/bCP40no677dorses/IMG_1259.htm

1440 Easter term

In 3rd entry: Lincs. Nicholas Berebruer, of Boston, Lincs, beer brewer
TNA CP40/717

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no717/bCP40no717dorses/IMG_1723.htm

1460 Hilary term
In 1st entry: Norf. James Berbrewer, of Lowystoft,
Suff, beer brewer
TNA CP40/796
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no796/bCP40no796dorses/IMG_0996.htm

1475 Hilary term
In 4th entry: York, Christopher Beerbruer, of York, beer
brewer
TNA CP40/853
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no853/bCP40no853dorses/IMG_1251.htm

1477 Hilary term
In 6th entry: Kent. William Berebruer, of
Sethyngbourn, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/861
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/aCP40no861fronts/IMG_0159.htm

1480 Hilary term
In 1st entry: Norf. Nicholas Broun alias Berbrewer, of
Walburghsewyk, Suff, beer brewer or husbandman
TNA CP40/871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1291.htm

Probably English

1440 Easter term
In last entry: Norf. William Rycheman, of Bishop's
Lenn, Norf, beer brewer
TNA CP 40/717
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no717/bCP40no717dorses/IMG_1588.htm

1460 Hilary term
In last entry: Norf. Peter Garne or Garve, of Ipswich,
Suff, beer brewer
TNA CP40/796
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no796/aCP40no796fronts/IMG_0363.htm

1460 Hilary term
In 4th entry: London. Richard Gileson, of Lambehithe
or Lambeth, Surrey, beer brewer
TNA CP40/796

http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT1/H6/CP40no796/aCP40no796fronts/IMG_0464.htm

1465 Hilary term
In 2nd to last entry: Dorset. William Broun, of
Sandwich, Kent, cooper & beer brewer
TNA CP40/814
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0690.htm

1465 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: London. Henry Williamson, of
Southwark, Surrey, beer brewer
TNA CP40/814
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0953.htm

1465 Hilary term & 1468 Hilary term
In 3rd entry (1465): Suff. John Yonge, of Hadley,
Suffolk, beer brewer
In 4th entry (1468): Suff. John Yonge, of Hadley,
Suffolk, beer brewer
TNA CP40/814 & 826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0010.htm
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1308.htm

1465 Hilary term
In 3rd entry: Kent. Richard Rykys alias Jolyson, of
Feversham, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/814
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no814/aCP40no814fronts/IMG_0198.htm

1468 Hilary term & 1480 Hilary term
In 6th entry (1468): Kent. William Peuter, of Lydd, or
of Canterbury, Kent, beer brewer
In 3rd to last entry (1480): Suff. William Peutere, of St
Osith, Essex, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826 & 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/aCP40no826fronts/IMG_0027.htm
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1746.htm

1468 Hilary term
In 1st entry: Middx. John Dewys, of London, beer
brewer

TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/aCP40no826fronts/IMG_0260.htm

1468 Hilary term
In 2nd to last entry: Surrey. Henry Johnson alias Newey, of South Lamehith, Surrey, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/aCP40no826fronts/IMG_0344.htm

1468 Hilary term & 1472 Hilary term
In 4th entry (1468): Norwich. William Couper, of Eston Bavent, Suff, beer brewer
In 2nd entry (1472): Norwich. William Couper, of Eston Bavent, Suff, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826 & 841
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1039.htm
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no841/aCP40no841fronts/IMG_0204.htm

1468 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: Hunts. John Assheton, of London, beer brewer; Agnes his wife, formerly Agnes Turyll, of London, widow
TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1200.htm

1468 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: Norfolk. Nicholas or Clays Bone, Boue or Bove, of Great Yarmouth, Norf, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1441.htm

1468 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: Essex. Bernard Baker, of Colchester, Essex, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1561.htm

1468 Hilary term
In last entry: Kent. John A Leke, of Strode, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/826
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no826/bCP40no826dorses/IMG_1739.htm

826dorses/IMG_1739.htm
1470 Trinity term
In 3rd entry: London. Thomas Thomas, of Newenton, Kent, beer brewer
TNA CP40/837
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no837/bCP40no837dorses/IMG_0545.htm

1472 Hilary term & 1480 Hilary term
TNA CP40/841 & 871
In last entry (1472): Kent. Thomas Cok, of Sandwich, Kent, beer brewer or sickle smith
In 3rd entry (1480): Kent. Thomas Cok, of Sandwich, beer brewer
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no841/aCP40no841fronts/IMG_0403.htm
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1117.htm

1472 Hilary term
In last entry: Essex. John Heyward, of Ware, Herts, beer brewer
TNA CP40/841
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no841/aCP40no841fronts/IMG_0729.htm

1472 Hilary term
In 4th entry: Lincs. Richard Snell or Suell, of Kingston on Hull, Yorks, beer brewer
TNA CP40/841
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no841/bCP40no841dorses/IMG_0925.htm

1472 Hilary term
In 2nd to last entry: London. Thomas Peyntour, of Rochester, Kent, beer brewer and draper
TNA CP40/841
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no841/bCP40no841dorses/IMG_1759.htm

1475 Hilary term
In 3rd to last entry: Essex. John Lane, of Lyghe/Leighs, Essex, beer brewer
TNA CP40/853
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no853/aCP40no853fronts/IMG_0483.htm

1475 Hilary term & 1480 Hilary term
In 1st entry (1475): Cambs. John Thoresby, of Bishops

Lenn, Norf, beer brewer
In 3rd to last entry (1480): Norf. John Thoresby, of
Bishops Lenn, beer brewer
TNA CP40/853 & 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no853/aCP40no853fronts/IMG_0793.htm
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/aCP40no871fronts/IMG_0669.htm

1475 Hilary term
In 4th entry: Yorks. John Bagley, of Beverley, Yorks,
beer brewer
TNA CP40/853
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT2/E4/CP40no853/bCP40no853dorses/IMG_0992.htm

1477 Hilary term
In 6th entry: York. William Byrsyngton or Brissyngton,
of Flaynburgh, Yorks, beer brewer or gentleman
TNA CP40/861
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/aCP40no861fronts/IMG_0366.htm

1477 Hilary term
In 4th entry: London. John Saunder, of London, draper
or beer brewer
TNA CP40/861
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/aCP40no861fronts/IMG_0773.htm

1477 Hilary term
TNA CP40/861
In last entry: Suff. Benedict Alvard, of Wodebrigge,
Suff, beer brewer
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no861/bCP40no861dorses/IMG_0912.htm

1480 Hilary term
In 7th entry: Essex. Edmund Rumbold, of Colchester,
Essex, beer brewer
TNA CP40/871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/aCP40no871fronts/IMG_0560.htm

1480 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: Norf. John Wolward, of Burnham St
Margaret, Norf, beer brewer
TNA CP/40 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_0970.htm

1480 Hilary term
In 2nd entry: Norf. Robert Houshold, of Bishops Lenn,
Norf, beer brewer
TNA CP/40 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1024.htm

1480 Hilary term
In 5th entry: Essex. Thomas Lane, of Legh/Leighs,
Essex, beer brewer
TNA CP/40 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1053.htm

1480 Hilary term
In last entry: Kent. William Gilis, of Sandwich, Kent,
beer brewer
TNA CP/40 871
http://aalt.law.uh.edu/AALT3/E4/CP40no871/bCP40no871dorses/IMG_1775.htm